

REPORT
OF
THE SREE RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT
(IN SOUTH INDIA)



Published by the devotees of
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1956



Sree Ramakrishna

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Swami Vivekananda

INTRODUCTION

THE RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT

(South India)

[Bhagavan Sree Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda have already become world-figures; their unbounded love and compassion are being more and more felt and understood by men and women of all religions and of all countries; and their clarion call to humanity to realise the Divinity within and to serve man as God has reverberated throughout the world and taken shape as what is now known as the 'Ramakrishna Movement']

It is nearly twenty seven years since Swami Nirmalanandaji, a chela and disciple of Sree Ramakrishna Deva has been actively working in South India. No report of it was presented to the Public till now, for, the Swami has never liked his name or work to be brought into the

lime-light. True child of Sree Ramakrishna that he is, he has never courted name and fame. He was simply content to carry on Sri Bhagavan's work silently and unostentatiously.

Now that, after long and arduous work, he has practically retired from active life and the beneficent results of his work stand out prominently in different parts of the land, we feel it our duty to place before the Public a short and connected account of what our beloved Acharya has done for the great and lasting good of the country. And this, we think, is just the time for it when this period of his work synchronises with the close of the centenary of Bhagavan Sree Ramakrishna which the whole world is now celebrating.

[When the illustrious Swami Vivekananda was leaving Madras, after his return from the west, Professor Sundara Rama Iyer asked him if he would continue his work in the south. "Have no doubt about that" came the Swamiji's ready reply, "I shall take some rest in the Himalayan region and then burst on the country like an avalanche." In Kerala, he did burst like an avalanche through the personality

of his beloved gurubhai, the revered Swami Nirmalanandaji.]

After an austere life of study and sadhana in the Mutt at Baranagore and of hard tapasya in the Himalayas for long years, the Swami, had at the request of Swami Abhedanandaji, gone to America in 1903 to help the propagation there of the teachings of Vedanta as interpreted by Sree Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Spreading the light, he stayed there for 3 years. Returning to India, he travelled widely in Northern India, broadcasting the teachings of the Vedanta wherever he went. Combining in himself to a remarkable degree the high spirituality of the east with the intense practicality of the west, he was chosen by the Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj, the spiritual son of Sree Ramakrishna, to take up the work of the Bangalore Ashrama and radiate the light of the Master's teachings from that centre.

The Swami's inspiring personality soon stirred the enthusiasm of the Public of Bangalore. With their loving co-operation and by dint of the Swamiji's strenuous exertions the

Ashrama grew rapidly and became one of the premier institutions of the kind in the whole of India. The Swami's name and the report of his selfless work could not fail to reach Kerala where the breath of rejuvenation that issued from Dakshineswar had already stirred some noble souls.

They had formed Religious Associations in Trivandrum, Thiruvalla, Haripad and other places. They used to meet regularly to study the works of Swami Vivekananda and other sacred books and to hold discourses and discussions on religious subjects. Actuated by a desire for further enlightenment and inspiration from personal contact with the direct disciples of the master, the Association at Haripad requested the Swami Nirmalanandaji to bless them by his holy presence at the time of the local celebration of the janmathithi of Bhagavan Sree Ramakrishna in the month of February 1911. The Swami kindly granted their request and reached Ernakulam on the 15th of the month. He was duly received there by the Secretary of the Association who escorted him to Haripad.

On the way he stopped at Alleppey where

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SWAMI BRAHMANANDA

he was received with great enthusiasm and reverence and the Swami delivered a very eloquent and inspiring speech on Bhakti in the S. D. Vidyasala Hall which created a deep and lasting impression in the public mind. [He ① then proceeded to Haripad where he was presented with two addresses of welcome. The Swami replied in the most suitable and touching terms, saying that he viewed the addresses not as a tribute paid to his humble self but as indicating the spirit of Bhakti towards Sree Guru Maharaj. The following day, the day fixed for the Birthday Anniversary Celebration, there were Bhajanas, procession and feeding the poor on a large scale, followed by a public meeting in the S. V. High School. In the course of an inspiring speech, the Swami pointed out the inherent strength of Hinduism. Considerable enthusiasm prevailed and as the discourse ended, joyous acclamations of 'Guru, Maharajjiki Jai' rent the air and a feeling of spiritual uplift was experienced by every one present in that huge assembly. The day is cherished as a red-letter day in the spiritual annals of Kerala.]

Next day, the Swami held Gita and medi-

tation classes and after giving the members of the association valuable advice about the line of work to be followed, left for Quilon.¹⁹⁰ He delivered a stirring speech in the Rama Varma Club Hall there. From Quilon the Swami returned to Bangalore.] Thereafter his visits to Kerala became frequent and were productive of immense good to the country, (as the subsequent pages will show.)

In September¹⁹¹ of the same year, the Swami visited Kerala again. This time, it was in response to the invitation of the Trivandrum Vedanta Society and this was his first visit to Trivandrum. The members of the Vedanta Society and the general public of Trivandrum gave a royal reception to the Swami in the Chakkai landing place. Doctor K. Raman Thampi, President of the Vedanta Society read an address of welcome and garlanded him. The Swami was taken in procession through the decorated streets of the town to the place of residence at Pujappura. The Swami gave a lecture in the Native High School under the presidency of Dewan Bahadur A. Govinda Pillai Avl., and two others in the Victoria Jubilee Town Hall presided by Sir M. Krishnan

Nair (the then Chief Justice of the Travancore High Court) and the late Mr. P. Raman Tampi (formerly Acting Chief Justice of the Travancore High Court) respectively. The lectures were followed by conversation classes, always brilliant and impressive. During the Swami's short stay there a stimulus was given to the religious consciousness of the people who were made to realise the necessity of doing useful work in many directions for the benefit of the country.

[The Swamiji then left for Tiruvalla on the invitation of the Tiruvalla Sree Ramakrishna Sangha to preside over its annual meeting. On his way, he got down at Varkala where he was presented with an address of welcome in Sanskrit verse by the late lamented Mahakavi Kumaran Asan on behalf of the disciples of Sree Narayana Guru Swami. From Haripad, he was escorted by the people of Tiruvalla in the beautifully decorated 'Snake boats' of Aranmula and taken in procession to the town of Tiruvalla. At the request of the local public, the Swamiji laid the foundation stone of the Ramakrishna Mandiram on the morning of the 28th October 1911 (12-3-1087

M. E.) In the evening of the same day he presided over the annual meeting of the Sangha held in the M. G. M. High School Hall. This address was as usual brilliant and the conversation that followed was highly instructive. After a brief stay in the place, the Swamiji left Travancore.]

In the following year, the Ramakrishna Association at Haripad requested the Swami to lay the foundation stone of the Sreeramakrishna Ashrama there. Kindly accepting the invitation, the Swami arrived at Haripad and laid the stone on 4th September 1912, (20-1-1088) on the site gifted by Mr. Venkitasubrahmany Iyer, now Swami Chitsukhananda. Steps were immediately taken to have the building constructed. The late lamented Mr. S. Subbaraya Iyer, the Vice-President of the association, then and there came forward with a donation of Rs. 1000. The work was complete by April, 1913, at a cost of about Rs. 5000.

[On the 4th May, 1913, (22nd Medam 1088) the installation ceremony commenced in the orthodox style with the recitation of Sri Rudram, Devi Mahatmyam, etc, and the likenesses



SWAMI NIRMALANANDA

of Bhagavan Sree Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda were solemnly installed on a beautiful altar in the shrine at the auspicious hour amidst the pealing of bells, blowing of conches, melodious playing of Nagaswaram and the fervent acclamations of "Sree Guru Maharajjiki jai". The Swami performed the Mangalarati. The mid-day Prasad over, the Swami performed a Vedic Homa at night in which all the Bhaktas present solemnly participated. The following day the poor were sumptuously fed and the Swami presided over a public meeting and made an eloquent speech on "Bhagavan Sree Ramakrishna and the Hindu Religion."]

From Haripad the Swami proceeded to Tiruvalla, touching Mannar, Mavelikkara and other places and creating enthusiasm wherever he halted on the way. The construction of the Ramakrishna Mandiram at Tiruvalla was complete and on 9th May, 1913, (27-9-1088) the Swami opened the building and installed Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. [The occasion was a glorious one and particularly at the time of the installation and aratri by the Swami, all persons present felt

themselves blessed and uplifted. There was feeding of the poor on a large scale in the afternoon and a public meeting in front of the Sree Vallabha Temple. The Swami made a thrilling speech as usual and the audience felt greatly edified. The Swami then left the place after giving instructions to the Sangham regarding the lines of future work. The measure of religious awakening brought about by the Swami's presence and activities in Central Travancore can be gauged by the large number of religious centres that have sprung up there.]

In the very same year the elite of Badagara in North Malabar requested the Swami to be kind enough to visit that place. The Swami acceded to the request and on his arrival was given a magnificent reception. He spent a couple of days at the place. It was here that the managers of the Yogi madhom at Quillandy had the good fortune to meet the Swami and to entertain the idea of handing over the Madhom to the Swami for the purpose of establishing an Ashrama. The idea was realised two years later.

The Swami visited Malabar again in 1914.

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This time a devotee of Sree Swami Brahma-nandaji requested Swamiji to grace Ottapalam by his presence. The Swamiji kindly agreed to do so, and on his way to Travancore broke the journey at Ottapalam and stayed there for a couple of days. There also many persons were highly benefited by the Swami's presence. His conversations were, as usual, a feast of reason and a flow of soul. The devotees were so charmed by his heroic personality that they requested him to include Ottapalam also in his programme of annual tours, and the Swami condescended to do so. His influence took such deep roots that before long scores of families and hundreds of souls took shelter at his Holy feet and the Ashrama at Ottapalam had a quick and wonderful growth.

From Ottapalam the Swami proceeded to Travancore via Ernakulam and Shertalai. [On his way he stayed at Alleppey for a few days and held conversations with the intelligentia of the place at the Rama Varma Club. These conversation classes which are a special feature of the Swami's visits to various places enable all persons who come into direct contact with the

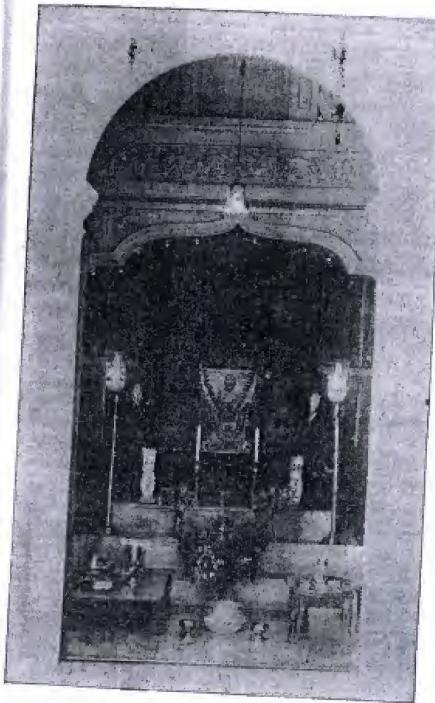
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Swami, to have their doubts cleared by the Swami's ready and illuminating answers to any questions put by them and to receive practical instructions conducive to their spiritual progress. These classes form as it were the nucleus of centres for future work.] Alleppey also had its Ashrama later. From Alleppey the Swami proceeded to Haripad and Trivandrum. Wherever he went he was welcomed enthusiastically by the local people.

[As a result of about 5 years work, there was a great awakening even among the masses who did not know English. They wanted to know more about the life and teachings of Bhagavan and Swami Vivekananda. To meet this growing want, therefore, and to present the truths of religion to the masses in their own language, it was found necessary to issue a Malayalam journal. And so, on the Vijaya Dasami Day in 1091 M. E. (17-10-1915/ 1-3-1091) the monthly, appropriately named "The Prabuddha Keralam", was started and first published at Quilon with the blessings of the Swami who was then at that station.]

During all this time, the Vedanta Society

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THE SHRINE
(TRIVANDRUM ASHRAMA)

of Trivandrum was on the look out for a proper place for an Ashrama. On 23-12-1915 (8-5-1091) the late Mr. Arunachalam Pillai (Retired Telegraph Master) made a gift of five and odd acres of land for the purpose. Five miles away from the din and bustle of the city, at Nettayam, on a beautiful eminence, the site commands a grand view of chains of hills on three sides and the Arabian Sea on the other. In securing the site, as also in the matter of designing the building, the late Mr. Hrishikesh Bannerjee (Asst. Engineer) took a prominent part. The construction work was immediately begun. Help began to pour in from various quarters. Here mention may be made of Mr. D. K. Ghosh, Agent to the Dickinson Company and the late Mr. Subrahmanyam Iyer, the then Conservator of Forests. The Swami of course frequently visited Trivandrum for the purpose of pushing on the work.] O

It then so chanced that His Holiness Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj was on a pilgrimage to Kannyakumari. His Holiness was persuaded by the Swami to include in his programme the laying of the foundation of the Trivandrum Ashrama. Sree Sree Maharajji

arrived in Trivandrum on the 8th of December, 1916. The next morning the ceremony of laying the foundation stone was gone through. The Holy One blessed all present and the occasion was indeed a solemn one. In the town Sree Maharaj was presented with an address of welcome by the Trivandrum Public. Thousands flocked to have his darsan. The Divinity radiating from him was felt by one and all. The next day His Holiness left for the Cape, via Nagercoil. After a week's stay he went back via Quilon and Ernakulam accompanied by the Swami.]

It took seven years to complete the Ashrama building, as the plan of the work was elaborate and as something like half a lac of Rupees had to be raised and spent for the purpose. Thanks to friends and sympathisers and the indefatigable exertions of the Swami, the construction of the building was completed early in 1924.

In the meanwhile the Swami thought it fit to admit into the fold of sannyasins a few young men who had already given up their worldly concerns and placed themselves under



SHRINE ENTRANCE DOOR
(Trivandrum Ashrama)

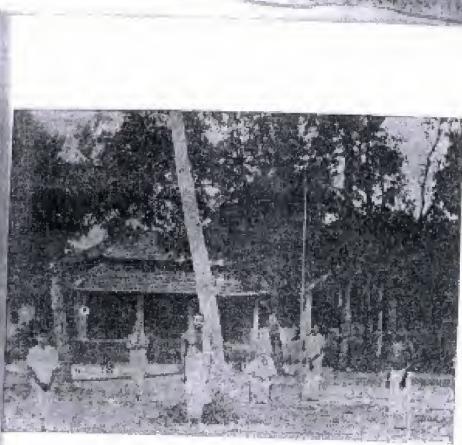
his discipline. Eleven Brahmacharins were initiated into Sannyas on 23-12-1923 (8th Dhanu, 1099) after performance of the usual Viraja Homa Ceremony at the Haripad Asrama.

The installation of the Trivandrum Ashrama was solemnised soon afterwards, viz., on Friday, 7-3-1924 (24-9-1099) that day being the 89th Janmatithi of Bhagavan Sree Ramakrishna. The celebration lasted for ten days. The installation was an imposing ceremony. Early that day Bhaktas flocked from all parts of the land and a thrill of spiritual elevation permeated the atmosphere. At the appointed hour and amidst prayer and music the Swami Nirmalananda solemnly installed the portraits of Bhagavan Sree Ramakrishna, the Holy mother, the Swami Vivekananda and the Swami Brahmananda on the beautiful altar prepared in the worship room. He then performed the Aratrika, and all those who wanted to do Archana (offering of flowers) were allowed to do so. Then followed the offering of Nivedyam and all assembled, irrespective of class and position, were treated to Prasad. A Homam was performed according to orthodox methods in which all Bhaktas took part. The festivals

continued up to Sunday, 16-3-1924 (3-8-1099). That day, the assemblage swelled still further, worshippers arriving from distant places as well. After Bhajanam, Aratrika and Nivedyam all present (including more than 2000 poor Narayanas) were sumptuously fed. There was music in the afternoon followed by a public meeting, attended by all the elite of the town. The Swami presided and a report was read by Swami Niranjanananda. Then Mr. Kunjarama Pathiyar B. A., Editor of the "Jenmikudiyam" who had come down from Malabar delivered a stirring address on "Sree Ramakrishna Charithamrita." A group photo was taken afterwards. The meeting assembled again and Swami Niranjanananda delivered a speech on the "Utility of Sree Ramakrishna Ashramas." The proceedings were terminated by a soul-stirring speech by the President. In the course of the speech, the Swami referred to the munificence of * Mr. Kulakkunnath Raman Menon, the founder of the B. V. Book Depot and Kamalalaya Printing Works in constructing the worship room (floored with marble

* After the decease of Mr. Raman Menon his successors have, to perpetuate his memory, made a donation to the Ashrama of Rs. three thousand.

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SRI R. K. ASHRAMA, HARIPAD.



SRI R. K. ASHRAMA, QUILON.

slabs) in memory of the late Professor A. R. Rajaraja Varma and making a well in commemoration of his deceased mother. The Swami referred also to the sacrifice, worthy of record, of a poor woman, who having nothing more valuable to give, sent her nose-ring as her offering for the worthy cause.] The Swami dwelt also on the all-comprehensiveness of Sree Ramakrishna's teachings, and impressed upon the audience the fact that all religions, if truly followed, lead to the same goal. He terminated the meeting by invoking Sree Ramakrishna's blessings on all. Ever afterwards the Ashrama has been growing in importance and usefulness to the Public.

Besides the daily Puja, Japam, Dhyanam and Swadhyaya, the celebrations of the Jenmathithis of Bhagavan Sree Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and the Holy Mother and of the holy festivals of Navaratri, Sivaratri etc., form the general activities of the Ashramas. [Feeding the poor is a main feature on all such occasions. Relief work in times of distress caused by famine, floods and epidemics is another important channel of the activities of these Ashramas in general]

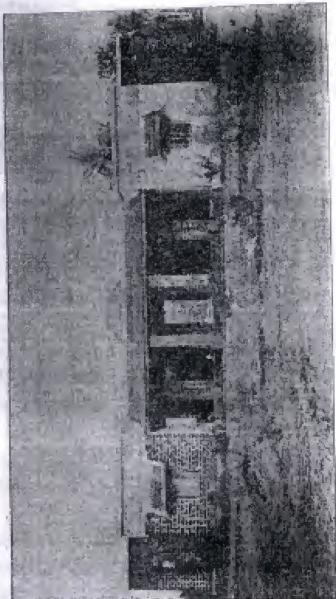
Special activities of particular centres will be noted briefly when each Ashrama is dealt with.

ASHRAMAS

(1) Haripad

The origin of the Haripad Ashrama has already been traced. Opened in 1913/1089, the first of its kind in Kerala, this Ashrama rapidly progressed. [It has been conducting a grant-in-aid Primary School for the depressed classes for the last twenty years. It was also maintaining a free Ayurvedic Dispensary. A weaving school attached to the Ashrama gave instruction to a number of boys of the locality and provided for them a useful vocation. The missionary zeal of Swami Chitsukhananda has contributed to the popularising of the teachings of Sree Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda throughout the Taluk of Karthikappalli wherein the Ashrama is situated.]

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S. R. K. ASHRAMA, THIRUVALLIKKENI.

(2) Tiruvalla

The consecration of the Ramakrishna Mandiram has been referred to already. Ever since 1913 the institution has been attracting several people to the life and teachings of Sree Ramakrishna, some of whom have dedicated their lives to the cause. Under the auspices of the institution, about a dozen Sunday schools are being successfully conducted. In 1928 (1103) the foundation for a new Ashrama on a better site was laid by Swami Nirmalanandaaji and in 1930 (1105) the Swamiji consecrated the large and spacious new building. Bhagavata classes form a special feature of this Ashrama.

(3) Quilandy

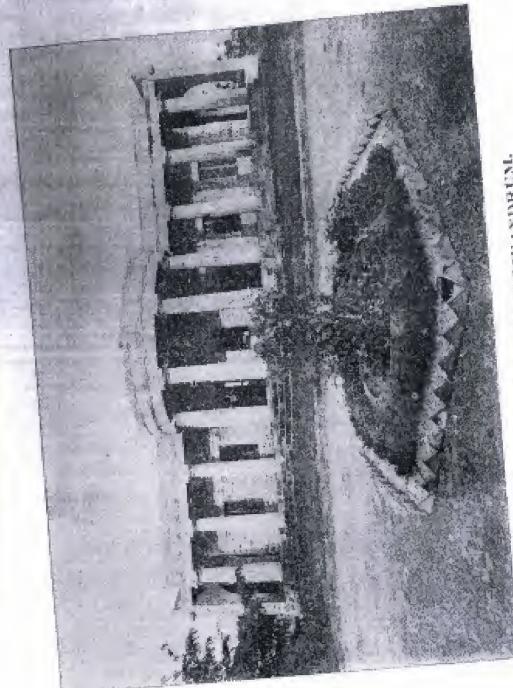
In 1084 M. E./1909 A. D. the people of the locality desired to have a place of worship open to the Hindus of all castes and in the following year a Sri Subrahmanya temple came into existence. This temple was known as Yogi Matham. The visit of the Swamiji to Badagara 14 miles from Quilandy during his tour in Kerala has been referred to already. Hundreds of people from far and near came to have a Darsan of the Swami. The managers

of the Yogi Matham also came; and hearing of Sree Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and their teachings from the lips of the Swami they were so impressed that they conceived the idea of converting the Yogi Matham to a Sree Ramakrishna Ashrama. On the 9th April 1914 a general meeting of the Hindus of Quilandy deputed three of their members to take immediate steps for carrying out their intention. The three deputies lost no time in working out the idea; and all arrangements were completed by the end of March 1915. At their request the Swami came down to Quilandy and performed the holy function of installing Sree Ramakrishna in the small fine building. From [1915] 1090 onwards, for a period of 8 years, the inmates of the Ashrama maintained and successfully conducted a Sanskrit School for the benefit of the local people. The Ashrama building underwent repairs in 1092 and a thorough overhauling in 1104. The influence from this centre has slowly but steadily spread to many parts of North Malabar.

(4) Trivandrum

After the inauguration of the Ashrama in 1924 as described earlier, the Swami stayed

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S. R. K. ASHRAMA, TRIVANDRUM.

here for a few months and devoted himself to the task of placing the institution on a sound and solid footing. And in subsequent years, whenever the Swami visited Travancore, he used to spend the greater part of his time in this Ashrama improving and developing its potency in various ways. His unflinching devotion to work as worship and the tremendous force of his character have been a constant source of inspiration to his devotees and disciples. Naturally enough, the Ashrama is having an accession of Brahmacharins in increasing numbers. They are given proper training and sent out to serve the country according to local needs as enjoined by the Swami Vivekananda. [With a view to the cultural elevation of the depressed classes some of the inmates of the Ashrama are engaged in imparting secular and religious education to them.] The Ashrama further maintains a charitable dispensary for the benefit of the poor. To meet the growing demands, the Ashrama premises were recently enlarged and substantial additions and improvements to the building itself were effected at a cost of about Rs. 10,000.

[This Ashrama has thus become the most

important one in Kerala and it attracts a large number of devotees and friends from all parts of the country. Many distinguished persons such as Mr. V. P. Madhava Rao, the Dewan of Travancore, Mysore and Baroda (March 1929) Sir Sivajnanan Pillay (November 1929), and Lady Puttanna Chetty (December 1930), Sir Purushottam Das Iswara Das, Sir Mirza Ismail son (February 1932), Sir C. P. Rainaswamy Sir M. Habibullah to mention a few of the many distinguished visitors have visited the Ashrama and they have been deeply impressed by its beneficent activities.]

(5) Alleppey

It has already been noted that when the Swami first came to Travancore in 1911 he delivered a soul-stirring speech on Bhakti in the S. D. Vidyasala, Alleppey. As a result, a small body of educated persons used to congregate regularly for religious worship and the study of sacred books like the Gospel of Sree Ramakrishna etc. The Swamiji encouraged them by occasional visits to the place.

Just after the installation of the Trivandrum

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Ashrama, the Prabuddha Keralam Office had to be shifted to another place. The late lamented Mr. P. G. Govinda Pillai, (Sirkar Vakil) gladly placed a garden and building of his in Alleppey at the disposal of the Swami. Thereupon the Swami transferred the P. K. Office to Alleppey in Edavam 1099. On the 22nd Edavam the Swami came to Alleppey and installed Sree Ramakrishna Deva there. Seeing that there was no sufficient accommodation for the Ashrama and the P. K. Office together in the same building, Mr. P. G. Govinda Pillai got an additional building put up there early next year.

Coming under the influence of this Ashrama certain Bhaktas of the Araya (fisherman) caste of a neighbouring village, Kanjaranchira, founded a Sree Ramakrishna Chaitanya Matham and began to conduct the Bhagavat Seva regularly. They too invited the Swami and he was so pleased with their work and devotion that he heartily invoked blessings of Bhagavan on them.

The Ashrama and the P. K. Magazine began to flourish. In the town regular religious

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classes were held; and in the adjoining places religious discourses and lectures were given by the inmates as occasions arose.

About the relief work undertaken by the Alleppey Ashrama in 1999, mention is made elsewhere.

(6) Muttam

A few friends and devotees of the Haripad Sree Ramakrishna Ashrama belonging to Muttam started a Prarthana Yogam and a Sarada Women's Yogam early in 1997. They soon conceived the idea of having an Ashrama for them.

A site was obtained in Edavum 1969 and at the request of the local people the Swami laid the foundation stone of the Ashrama. In the early part of 1971 the building was finished; the Swamiji came and the installation ceremony was performed on the auspicious day of 1st October 1925/16th Kanni 1971 (Paurnima Day). The Ashrama was named the Premananda Ashrama. In 1974 a Sree Ramakrishna Seva Samiti was organised and it conducts regular religious classes on Sundays both in the morning and in the noon. Attendance is



SRI YOGANANDA ASHRAMA, ALLEPPEY.



SRI PREMANANDA ASHRAMA, MUTTAM.

good. The place is becoming a centre of great religious activity.

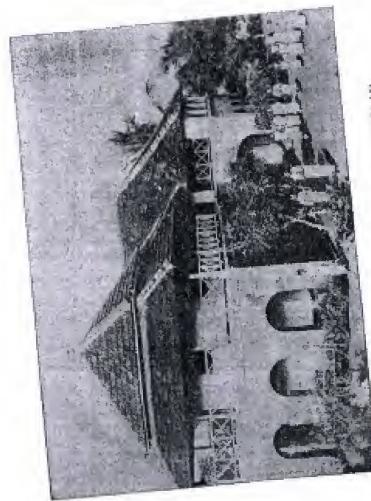
(7) Ottapalam

As stated in an earlier part of this report, the establishment of the Sree Ramakrishna Niranjan Ashrama at Ottapalam was one of the happy results of Sree Swamiji's visits to that place. At that time certain Nambodiri gentlemen of Palapuram had put up a small building on the eastern bank of the Bharatapuzha, a mile and a half south east of the Ottapalam Railway Station. Their intention was to raise a temple on the land. After they came in contact with the Swami, they felt that an Ashrama founded by him would better serve their spiritual needs than the proposed temple. Accordingly the jenmi of the property, the Palathol Ilam, and its occupant made a gift of the land and the building to the Swami who kindly accepted it. [Close upon this a Vishnu Temple which was in a dilapidated condition was also gifted to the Swami by the proprietor thereof.] The devotees and the sympathising public co-operating, other buildings of modest dimensions were also put up towards the end of 1926. On Friday, the 10th of December

1926 (25-4-1926) Sree Swamiji duly consecrated the Ashrama. [The fine Vishnu Vigraha of the old temple was also installed in the shrine room. It is a strange and happy coincidence that the image is of Gadadhara Narayana.] There was a Sivalingam in the old temple. That also was brought over to the Ashrama and, later on, installed in a nice little temple erected for the purpose. Additions and improvements are being made to the Ashrama buildings from time to time. The Ashrama garden with its luxuriant growth of flower plants cocoanut palms and mango trees extends over four acres of land and overlooks a splendid natural scenery. A new building has been put up for the free Patisala which the Ashrama is conducting for the children of the locality who are mostly poor.

Besides the regular Puja and Bhajana, the reading of the scriptures for the benefit of the public, is an item of the inmates' daily work. [The Sree Ramakrishna centenary celebration lasting for several days was attended by thousands of people from far and near.] In commemoration of the event the Ashrama published a religious drama entitled Sree Narsimhavatra.

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SRI NIRANJAN ASHRAMA, OTTAPALAM.

(8) Kayankulam

From 1089 onwards the Brahmachari in charge of the Haripad Ashrama used to travel in Muttam, Evur, Cheppad, Kayankulam, Ochira, and other places spreading the lofty ideals of Bhagavan Sree Ramakrishna and the Swami Vivekananda. Several conversations, Kirtanam parties and lectures were held successively every year. In 1095 the Swami visited Kayankulam in response to an invitation of the Kayankulam Yuvajana Samaj and stirred up a great enthusiasm among them. The Yuvajana Samaj enlarged the scope of its work and transformed itself into a Sree Ramakrishna Sangham.

From that time the Sangham slowly progressed and in 1926 Srimati Lekshmi Pillai of Kalikkal house made the gift of a site and some paddy fields to the Swami. In August the same year, the Swami laid the foundation stone for an Ashrama. Swami Chitsukhananda was put in charge of the building work. With the hearty co-operation of a few gentlemen of the locality, the building was completed. The Swami fixed the 6th Medam 1105/18th April 1930 as the auspicious day for the installation ceremony and

amidst the acclamations of the people and the religious songs of the Kirtan parties, Sree Swami Ji performed the holy ceremony. [The Ashrama was named Sree Brahmananda Ashrama and Swami Chitsukhananda was given special instructions as regards the conduct of its management.] This Ashrama also is progressing satisfactorily. A new kitchen house is under construction. The annual reading of the whole Sree Bhagavata in seven consecutive days is a special feature here.

(9) Kulattur

At Kavunbhagam, Kulattur on the southern bank of the river Manimala 16 miles to the east of Tiruvalla town some young men began a Bhajana Sangham in 1095. They used to meet on every Ekadasi day observes strict fast and devote themselves to Bhajanam and Adhyayanam. In 1101 the secretary of the Sangham invited some inmates of the Alleppey Ashrama for their annual meeting and evinced great interest in the teachings of Sree Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. From that time onwards the interior villages of the Taluk began to come under the influence of the Sree Ramakrishna movement. In 1102 the Sangham

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SRI BRAHMANANDA ASHRAMA, KAYAMKULAM.



S. R. K. ASHRAMA, KULATHUR.

purchased a site and commenced the work of building an Ashrama there. Not long after, the Bhajana Sangham transferred its right to the Swami. By that time the prominent men of the place were slowly gravitating towards the ideals of the Ashrama. In the course of a couple of years a fine strong building was constructed. The Swami, in kind response to the invitation of the Bhajana Sangham was pleased to come to Kulattur and performed the installation ceremony on the 13th Medam 1105/25th April 1930. The Swami's coming awakened great enthusiasm and the installation day continues to be a great day of annual festivity in Kulattur and the adjoining places.

The Ashrama work is spreading in that part of the country. A Sree Ramakrishna Seva Samiti was formed in 1107/1932 to help the spread of education among the poor and depressed of that hilly locality.

Under the auspices of the Ashrama the following institutions do beneficent work:-

1. A Vernacular School.
2. A Weaving School.
3. A Reading Room and Library.

4. A Night School for the adults of the depressed classes.

(10) Palai

At Vellappad, about a mile to the east of the present Ashrama a few young men formed themselves into a Vedanta Sangham in 1097 (1921) and conducted their meetings in the Puliyanur and Arunapuram Schools. One of the promoters of this Sangham and an active worker, Chuntakkad Narayana Pillai, came forward in 1099/1923 with the proposal that the Vedanta Sangham should be converted into a Sree Ramakrishna Bhajana Sangham and that he would place a small building at its disposal. He set up a worship room and began to perform regular Puja. This attracted attention and in 1101 the birthday celebration of Swami Vivekananda was conducted on a very grand scale. The depressed classes were invited and for the first time in Palai they were allowed to participate freely in a function of this kind. The people were astonished at the great success of the function. Lecturers were enthusiastic and the late Mr. P. G. Govinda Pillai as the president of the function in a brilliant oration exhorted the people to commence

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loving man as the visible representation of God.

The Sangham caused a large hall to be added to the small building and two rooms in front. In 1102/1926 the said Narayana Pillai made a gift of the whole land and building to the Swami, and another devotee Srimati Pappi Amma of Elampilkal house gave 48 cents of land for the Ashrama Puja purposes.

In 1103 Swami Chidambaranand a disciple of the Swami got a plot of land a mile to the west which he considered suitable for an Ashrama. With the permission of the Swami the work of building was begun and the main items of work were finished in the same year. Swami Chidambarananda transferred his right in favour of the Swami.

On the 15th Medam, 1105, the Swami came for the solemn ceremony of installation. Devotees assembled in very large numbers and the function, including the feast, the lectures and the addresses to the Swami was a grand success.

After giving instructions to the Swami in

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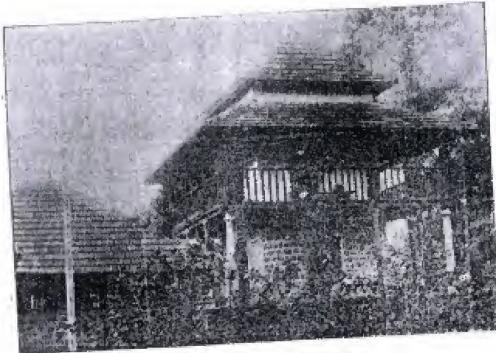
charge, regarding the work to be done, the Swami went back to Trivandrum.

In 1109 the Swami went to Palai again. The Vaisayas of the locality who were conducting a primary school offered to place its management in the hands of the Swami in charge of the Ashrama. It was accepted.

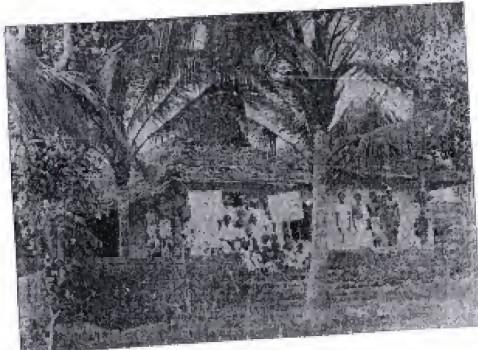
A flower garden in front of the building already in the possession of the Ashrama by means of a verbal gift from one Mr. Kunjan Chettiyar was formerly secured by means of a registered document. Another plot of land about 80 cents in extent was purchased towards the end of the year.

For some time the depressed classes of Edanad and Valavur were exerting themselves in the matter of education and religious worship. In 1110 a small plot of land was acquired for Harijan Temple; a building was put up and regular worship has already been commenced. A boarding school for the benefit of the depressed classes on a very modest scale is also being conducted.

Once every year the Bhajana Sangham



S. R. K. ASHRAMA, PALAI.



S. R. K. ASHRAMA, ADUR.

singing Kirtans, travels through the whole of Meenachil.

(11) Pudukkad

When in 1927/1103 the Swami was staying in the Ottapalam Ashrama, one Mr. Sankaran Nambudiri of Vimpurmana paid a visit to the Swami. He had heard of Bhagavan Sree Ramakrishna and as he now sat before a direct disciple of the Holy One of Dakshineswar, his joy was unbounded. Next year when he came to the Swami his offering at the feet of the Swami was 2 acres of ground, a temple dedicated to Sasta on the bank of Kurumalippuzha in Padukkad—Cochin, and a sum of Rs. 750. The Swami was pleased to accept the offering and lost no time in making arrangements for the construction of an Ashrama there. The Cochin Devaswam Department contributed a decent amount towards the construction of the building which was finished in the year 1933.

On the morning of the 7th April 1934 (25th Meenam 1109) the Swami came from Ottapalam and was received by a large crowd of influential persons including a number of Srotriyas, and with recitations from the Vedas

in the meditation hall the Swami performed the ceremony of installation.

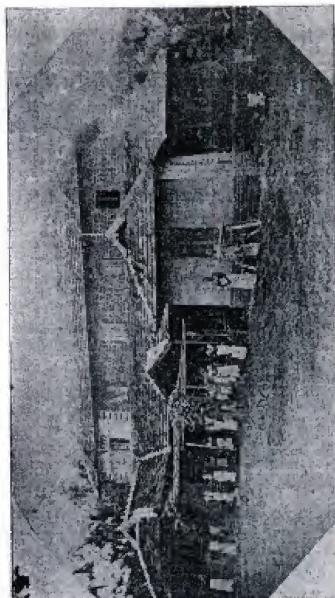
After a sumptuous feast in which all participated, addresses were presented to the Swami and lectures were delivered by distinguished men. The Swami in the course of a brilliant speech thanked the people for their fine and kind sentiments and appealed to the people to look upon even the so called untouchables as limbs of the Virat Purusha and worship them with true love and devotion.

The Ashrama is now in the charge of Swami Puranjanananda.

(12) Adur

Certain sannyasin disciples of the Swami Nirmalanandaji have been visiting Pandalam, Pallikkal, Adur, Ezhankulam, Pathanapuram, Pattazhi, Mannadi and several other places thereabout during the years 1929 and 1930. Situated as it is, in the midst of a lovely scenery, Adur was deemed an ideal place for an Ashrama and two of the Swamies went to Adur in 1931 and found out a beautiful hill-site with an area of 5 acres and they resolved to purchase

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S. R. K. ASHRAMA, PUDUKKOTAI

the site. It was at this juncture that the charitable Mr. Khattawo Kimjee, Proprietor of the Empire Coir Works, Alleppey, who had rendered in the past substantial help to the Alleppey centre and the Prabuddha Keralam readily met the cost of purchasing the site. There was already a small building and a well on the premises. Soon after, the Ashrama began to function. The old building was renovated. The Swamiji visited the centre on 15th March 1932/2nd Meenam 1107. Besides a night school for the depressed, the centre maintains three Harijan students and Swami Nrisimhananda, who is at present in charge, takes a keen interest in their education. It is indeed a matter for congratulation that this Ashrama exerts a salutary influence in smoothening the friction between the castes and the classes in the locality. A new building on the crest of the hill is under contemplation.

(13) Arur

The visits of Sree Swamiji to Shertalai in 1088 naturally resulted in the dissemination of the teachings of Sree Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in the Taluk. Mr. Padmanabha Pillai (now Swami Ramananda), a young en-

thusiast, in co-operation with a few of his influential friends procured an acre of land on the western side of the Alleppey—Arur road at Arur. They went to Ottapalam in 1104 and requested the Swami to lay the foundation stone for an Ashrama at Arur. Swamiji deputed Swami Chitsukhananda for the purpose and the foundation was laid the very same year. In 1933/1109 Swamiji performed the dedication ceremony of the Ashrama and with it was assured the spiritual uplift of the fortunate public of Shertalai.

(14) Neyyur

The promoters of the 'Hindu Dharma Ashrama' of Neyyur, a notable village in South Travancore, transferred by a deed of gift the premises with the building of the Dharmasrama to Swami Nirmalananda ji as they felt convinced that they would thereby enhance the usefulness of that institution. One of Swamiji's disciples took charge of the centre on 25-11-1931/9-4-1107. The inmates of the Ashrama, along with the depressed brothers of the Hindu fold—so long subject to untold disabilities—move out in Bhajana parties and visit the houses of the Savarnas and thereby enlist more



S. R. K. ASHRAMA, NEYYUR.



S. R. K. ASHRAMA, MOOVATTUPUZHA

and more of the latters' sympathy for the cause. The birthday of Sree Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda are being observed in due form. Gita classes on all Sundays and scriptural studies every evening form a salient feature of the work.

(15) Moovattupuzha

The Puthanpurakkal family generously donated in 1930/1106 an acre and a half of land, on the top of a beautiful hillock adjoining the Thodupuzhai river for the purpose of founding an Ashrama at Moovattupuzha. A small shed was immediately put up and a well sunk and the Brahmacharin in charge commenced Bhagavat Seva right after. In 1931/1107 Swami Nirmalanandaji visited the Ashrama and halted there for a day. The event is cherished in loving and devout memory by those privileged to meet the Swamiji there. With the co-operation of several enthusiastic persons a fine building is coming up. A Parava student of the local V. M. School is given free boarding and instruction in the Ashrama.

The Salem Sree Ramakrishna Ashrama

(From the Report of the Salem Ashrama
dated 24-2-1936.)

"The late Mr. B. V. Namagiri of Salem conceived the idea of establishing an Ashrama in this town. He purchased a site in the Sivamipuram Extension and with the aid of friends such as the late Dr. Narayana Iyer and others collected subscriptions and built the Ashrama building, contributing the balance required to finish the work. Mr. N. K. V. Vijayaraghava Chetty contributed towards the construction of a kitchen to Ashrama and Mr. N. S. Lakshmananarasimha Chettiar has made a gift of a small piece of land in the back portion of the Ashrama premises. Swami Nirmalananda first performed the pleasant function of laying the foundation stone and after the completion of the building the consecration of the shrine in the Ashrama on 14th November, 1928. Ever since, two Swamies

are working in the Ashrama, looking after the regular Puja and Bhajana; religious classes are held for explaining Bhagavatam, Ramayanam, Gospel of Sree Ramakrishna, spiritual teachings of Swami Brahmananda, etc. Occasional Harikathas and lectures by competent hands are held in the Ashrama. Gita classes are also held for the benefit of the youngsters, many of whom have made considerable progress in the Parayanam of the Gita."

Salem Sree Ramakrishna Ashrama Dispensary

On 26-2-1933 the Salem Ashrama was able to open an Ayurvedic Free Dispensary in the heart of the town chiefly through the generosity of the Salem Urban Co-operative Society. Other donors such as the Salem Municipality, the District Urban Bank and the Salem Bank actively co-operated in the philanthropic enterprise. We are glad that the usefulness of the Dispensary is steadily increasing under the able guidance of Swami Srikanthananda. The number of patients treated in 1935 was 16492.

The work of the Dispensary had to be

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extended to the neighbouring village at Alagapuram where fever in an epidemic form broke out in January 1935. Regular medical aid is given to the afflicted at least three days in the week.

By the conversion of step-well into a draw-well at an expense of Rs. 500 generously given by the Hon. Dewan Bahadur Justice K. Sundaram Chettiyar, guinea worm disease was stamped out from the village.

The Salem Sree Ramakrishna Patasala

The Ashrama started a free Patasala for the benefit of the children of the Harijan Cheri in the neighbourhood of Ashrama in 1935. Swami Viswambharananda is in charge. The institution has become so popular that there is demand for adult education to the labouring population of the village during nights also.

The Calicut Sree Ramakrishna Sevashrama

As a result of Sree Swamiji's tour over Malabar in 1913 there had come into existence

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the Sree Ramakrishna Vedanta Sangham of Calicut, and due to the earnest desire of some of its members, a small house was taken on rent at Chalappuram on December 11th 1930, to serve the purpose of an Ashrama and Swami Sekharananda was sent to supervise the work of the institution. [A charitable dispensary for children attached to the Ashrama began to function from 19th April 1931. A committee was organised for the efficient management of the Sevasrama assisted by a body of honorary physicians, and Sri Swamiji was elected the Life President.]

Daily Puja is conducted in the Ashrama for the benefit of devotees. Every Sunday, Gita classes are conducted in the Vedanta Sangha, religious classes at Zamorin's College and Ganapathy High School for boys and girls respectively. In connection with the centenary of Sree Ramakrishna there was especially arranged various religious lectures, an essay competition besides prizes to Harijans. Vivekananda Sandesam, Sri Ramakrishna Stotra Tirtha and other pamphlets have been published from the centre. Thanks to the enthusiasm, generosity and co-operation of its Calicut

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friends, the Sevasrama is making steady progress. Medical relief was given to 9469 patients in 1935.

Nettayam Vaidyasala, Trivandrum.

The Dispensary was started on Karitika Day November 1935. The institution is particularly beneficial to Malaria patients. In this hilly tract the dispensary has supplied a long-felt want and is bound to succeed.

SCHOOLS

(1) S. R. K. Ashrama Pulaya School, Haripad.

About 1915/1090 Brahmachari Chellappa (now Swami Chitsukhananda) of the Haripad Ashrama began to take keen interest in the education of the depressed classes of the locality; and as the Pulayas were not given admission in those days in all Government Schools a primary School was opened under the auspices of the Ashrama and it gained Government recognition very soon. The children were given lessons from the Ramayana and the Maha Bharata and also lessons from the Life of

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Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. A new life and hope has been instilled into the poor people and they are fast imbibing the elements of Hindu culture.

(2) S. R. K. Ashrama V. P. School, Puliyannur.

This School started by the Vaisyas of Puliyannur twenty years ago, was rapidly growing in strength, and serving a very useful purpose in that locality. In 1934 the Vaisya Samajam handed over the management of the School to the Ashrama authorities. In the last two years the school received improvement in the shape of extension to the premises and school buildings and is now in a prosperous condition.

(3) Vidyapitham at Vaipur, Kulathur.

In 1932 a Harijan School was started by the Ashrama for the benefit of the depressed class students of Vaipur and the adjacent villages on a beautiful site gifted by Mr. Krishna Panikkar, a local land-owner. The high class Hindus were very sympathetic and as a result, a spacious building 80 ft. long and 20 ft. broad was soon constructed. Government readily gave recognition and grant. Now the strength of the

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school is a little over 200. It is growing as a very popular institution. Another large building is now under construction.

(4) Weaving School at Kulathur

On the request of the manager of the Ashrama and on the recommendation of the protector of the depressed classes, a weaving school was started in March 1935. The Government sent an instructor and two hands for imparting instruction for one year. At present the poor people of the locality are making good use of the institution.

(5) Night School at Kulathur

The Kulathur Night School is being conducted for the benefit of the old and illiterate Harijans. It is well attended. 21 males and 5 females are now on the rolls.

(6) Library and reading room at Kulathur

This Institution was started in 1932. It soon became very popular and is resorted to by a large number of Muslims, Christians and Hindus.

(7) Sunday religious classes at Kulathur

The number of these classes is increasing

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and we have them at Kulathur, Vaipur, Murani, Ezhumattur and Pirayar. Nearly 400 students are attending and all these classes are working under the same management and with the same syllabus.

(8) The Harijan Class at Nettayam

For the last four years a free day-school has been going on for the poor Harijan children of the locality and it is gratifying to see that these children very soon pick up the three R's and elements of Geography. They show improvement in conduct and character in so short a time that one is forcibly reminded of Swami Vivekananda's words that 'Man is potentially divine.'

PUBLICATIONS

The origin of the Prabuddha Keralam has been described elsewhere. It commands a wide circulation among the Malayalam speaking public. It has published a number of books and pamphlets including the lives of Sree

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Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and translations of Ramakrishna Kathamrita and the works of Swami Vivekananda.

TEMPORARY RELIEF WORKS

(1) Flood Relief Work.

The flood in 1924 was a great calamity for South India and particularly for Central Travancore. When the floods set in with tragic suddenness and thousands became destitute and homeless, the Alleppey town hastened to help them. The inmates of the Yogananda Ashrama proffered their services and were in the forefront of the relieving party until the floods subsided. The inmates of the Trivandrum Ashrama joined them. During the six months of the work, about Rs. 20,000 was distributed (including Rs. 14,000 entrusted by the Central Flood Relief Committee, Trivandrum) in rice, house building materials and cash amongst the afflicted in the Taluks of Shertalai, Ambalappuzha, Kartikappalli, Changanacheri, Thuvalla and Pathanamitta.] Reference has been

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made about our work in the Report of the Central Flood Relief Committee.

(2) Malaria Relief Work

During the Malaria Epidemic in 1935 which ravaged the Neyyattinkara Taluk, when thousands died and hundreds of children became orphans, more than half a dozen Sanyasins were engaged in Relief operations for over three months from the Relief Centres of Maranallur, Perumkadavila, Ottassekharanmangalam, Kalikkad, Chempur, Cheriyakolla, Kottukal and Kunmathukal, in full co-ordination with the Government.] The workers were visiting about 7,000 houses once in ten days and were vigilantly on the move, carrying rice and medicine, hope and consolation to the suffering and the bereaved. They penetrated even the almost inaccessible places of that mountainous area. [In this connection the Durbar Physician, the Deputy of Government for the control of the disease, has made appreciative reference about "the great unstinted and selfless services rendered by the Ramakrishna Brothers for the relief of the suffering poor." (The detailed report of the Malaria Relief Work was published in the "Prabuddha Keralam" Vol. XXI, p. 157.)]

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OTHER ACTIVITIES

(1) Sri Vivekananda Sevashrama, Edanad, Palai.

The Pulayas of the locality have been for a long time labouring under the disadvantage of having no place of worship for them. Being oppressed by time-honoured caste-restrictions, they were steadily declining in strength and spirit. The Palai Ashrama thought it fit to organise them and provide them with a place of worship. With the co-operation of several high class Hindus, a plot of land was obtained in 1934 and a neat building was put up. Arrangements were made for worship. A Swami Vivekananda Samithi also has been started for spreading education among the Harijans. Quickly extending its activity, it now maintains a few Pulayas in the Sevashrama and imparts education both secular and religious to young and old alike. It is gratifying to see that more and more people are coming under its influence.

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(2) Poor House at Ernakulam.

At the instance of the Cochin Government the poor House Committee at Ernakulam opened a poor house in June 1932. The internal management of the Poor House was placed in the hands of a Brahmachari of the Sri Rama-krishna Pracharam. Nearly thirty of the helpless, destitute and infirm are now finding solace and comfort in the Home. Facilities are eagerly provided for the spiritual satisfaction of the poor people of all creeds by the superintending Brahmachari.

(3) S. R. K. Asrita Vanitha Samajam, Trivandrum.

This association was started in 1930 by the lady devotees with the blessings of Swamiji. It meets twice a month—every alternate Sunday. They have their Bhajana, Prayers and reading of religious books. The association is exercising its benign influence in an increasing measure in the neighbourhoods of the houses in which the prayer meetings are being held. They celebrate their anniversary at the Ashrama with special Puja and feeding of the poor.

(4) The Narendra Mission

[The mission was started on 29th May 1936]

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in order to afford greater facilities to the lay public to co-operate with the several centres brought into existence by the Sree Ramakrishna movement in Kerala] and for the following objects set out in the memorandum of Association viz., (a) To study and preach the principles of the Vedanta as interpreted by Sree Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. (b) To impart education technical, industrial and spiritual in accordance with the requirements of time, place and person and to establish and maintain institutions with those objects. (c) To serve man irrespective of caste, creed or colour as the creed of the association is to serve God. (d) To co-operate and actively sympathise with any institution or person having similar objects in view as those of the association. (e) To establish branches and allow the affiliation of any independent institution desiring to work under the guidance of the association. (f) To print and publish from time to time books, journals, periodicals, pamphlets and leaflets in furtherance of the association. (g) To do all such things as are directly or indirectly necessary or conducive to the attainment of the objects of the association or any of them.

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Many influential persons have promised their sympathy and co-operation.

CONCLUSION

With the opening of several Ashramas and the widening of the philanthropic activities, the movement has gained further impetus. People in various parts of the country begin to take keener interest therein and desire to have centres in their own places. Several young men have joined the Ashramas as Brahmacarins and many of them have been initiated into Sanniyas and put in charge of various centres of work. The silent example of the Ashramas has done more for levelling social inequalities than many speeches and demonstrations could do. The Ramakrishna movement pre-eminently works for the unification of India, without at the same time destroying the different cultural and social characteristics of her people. It is up to the sons and daughters of India to see how it works and to see that it works well. Sree Ramakrishna came for the salvation of all man-

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kind. Yet Indians and Hindus in particular have a special responsibility in the matter. To them religion is the very back bone of life and national regeneration must come through Renunciation and Service—the essence of all religions.

We fervently hope that the beneficent and fruitful work accomplished by a child of Sree Ramakrishna will be continued with earnestness and enthusiasm. And may we in all humility pray that He send us His children—Strength and Love and grant unto us the Light Divine.

Recd 7.9.2015

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